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Question1: As a beginning farmer and FSA County Office employee I experience first hand the problems not only young farmers, but all farmers face. In my area, many farmers cannot afford to purchase land due to a combination of high land prices, increasing input cost and lower crop prices. The result of this situation is producers having to rent the majority of their land. Now landowners are beginning to demand the farm's DCP payments plus land rent. In some situations the owner has threatened to not rent the land to the producer if he/she doesn't comply with their request. One possible solution to the landowner receiving the assistance intended for the producer would be to fix DCP payments to a tax I.D. number instead of a farm number and require the producer to prove he/she has enough land rented/owned to cover the base acres they are being paid on. This would not tie assistance to production; therefore it would not be a trade issue. Another topic that has been discussed as a means of helping reduce the federal deficit is a cap on the amount of nonrecourse loans a producer could be eligible for. Placing a cap on nonrecourse loans based upon the direct yield (the method being proposed) would seriously adversely affect a beginning producer's ability to become established in the production agriculture sector. As a beginning farmer myself, I base all budget decisions upon receiving at least the loan rate for my entire crop. If I cannot depend on a specified price for my entire crop, I cannot make sound financial decisions (equipment purchases/repairs, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.). I believe, as a farmer and a FSA employee, the cap on nonrecourse loans stands to cause irreversible damage to the production agriculture community, not only beginning farmers but everyone. One solution would be to define a beginning farmer and not limit him/her to a cap on nonrecourse loans. Crop insurance is another area that concerns me as a young farmer. This is my first year planting any crops. As I discussed my insurance options with my agent before planting the crop, I realized the yield guarantees were so low for my county that I would not have much to fall back on in a disaster year. To date, if I were to lose my crop have zero production, I would stand to lose \$110 per acre. This does not include inputs I have not made yet. Not many farmers can absorb a \$110 per acre loss and remain in business. It would be impossible for a beginning farmer who does not have much equity or assets built to absorb such a devastating hardship. I understand the need to prevent crop insurance fraud, but the lack of coverage for beginning farmers presents a major hurdle to overcome to become successful and remain farming for the future. I regretfully say it, but I cannot offer any suggestions on how to remove this barrier.

Question2: If the U.S. producer is to compete globally, the playing field should be level. Cost of inputs (labor, land, fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, technology fees, equipment, etc.) should be equal for everyone. Regulatory practices that are enforced in the U.S. but not in other countries should be compensated for in some way.

Question3: Smaller profit margins, due to higher input cost and low

commodity price, have caused some producers to quit farming. The land these people occupied now becomes open. Other farmers absorb this land in order to survive on the lower per acre profit margin. This has created fewer and larger farms. Also, the yield plateau is being pushed higher on crops being grown today. The producer cannot afford to plant low yielding varieties of the crops that they grow due to the low profit margin. In order to stay alive in the current agriculture economy, the producer must produce more per acre on more acres. Larger producers also have an advantage over smaller producers in the economy of scale factor. Overall, if the statistics are analyzed carefully, it will be seen that government subsidies are going to the people who are producing the food/fiber. I believe 80% of government payments go to 20% of producers, but that 20% is producing 80% of the food/fiber. Total farm numbers cannot be considered. Many "farms" and "farmers" are those who have three goats, two horses and two acres of corn to feed the livestock. These "farmers" have no intentions of making a living on the crop or livestock, because the goats are there to keep the grass eaten and the horses are there to ride twice a year. To me the argument of payments being made unfairly to larger producers is null. If someone wants to receive more payments, they should purchase/rent more land. The only producers who are losing in the current farm program are the fruit and vegetable growers. I do not know much about the fruit and vegetable industry, so I cannot make any type of educated suggestions.

Question4: As an employee of FSA, I have observed that the current conservation programs (CRP) do very little to nothing to help producers. In some instances they have increased land prices, both purchase price and rental value. Conservation programs that subsidize producers for performing more environmentally practices on their farm should be considered. One problem with the above mentioned type of conservation program is the requirement of long term leases or ownership of the land. As mentioned in the above questions, producers in my area rent most of their land and do not have a long term lease. Also, if future payments are to be geared more towards environmental stewardship, it needs to be available to every producer on every field they grow crops on. Current programs limit selected producers to just a few fields on a farm. Not everyone who applies is accepted, unlike the DCP program.

Question5: I'm unable to answer this question.

Question6: I believe a great deal of emphasis should be placed upon alternative energy sources. Beyond this, I do not know how to answer the question.